

# The Primitive Republican.

F. G. BALDWIN,

"Error may be safely tolerated, when Truth is left free to combat it."—JEFFERSON.

Editor & Proprietor.

OLD SERIES, VOL. IX NO. 39.

COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI, THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 1851.

NEW SERIES, VOL. 2 NO. 22.

## THE REPUBLICAN.

Is published every Thursday Morning.

Office on the South East corner of Main and St. John Streets, immediately above the Grocery Store of Thomas H. Williams.

TERMS:—Three Dollars a year, in advance. Single Copies, 10 Cents. For those who pay for their subscription in advance, the paper will be sent by mail, and no charge made for postage.

RATES OF ADVERTISING:—One Dollar a square for first insertion; and 50 Cents a square for each subsequent insertion. Ten lines or less constitute a square.

For less than a square, 25 Cents a line. For less than a line, 10 Cents a word.

Professional Cards published at paper furnished, and one year at \$12.00.

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Advertisements for the year contracted for at a liberal discount.

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JOB PRINTING:—Of all kinds neatly and promptly executed.

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## To the People of Eastern Mississippi.

The Mobile and Ohio Railroad—its progress—its prospects—its feasibility—its importance to Mississippi—its advantages to the South.

THE EDITOR OF THE PRIMITIVE REPUBLICAN, has kindly placed his columns at my service, and several ardent friends of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, have been kind enough to urge me to address you regarding that most important enterprise.

Political themes have so long been the all-absorbing topics of discussion, I have thought that the direction of the public mind to a subject, at least equally important, and to one so intimately connected with the present interests and future prosperity of the people of this section, would be to them a grateful relief if it accomplished no higher purpose.

The first public meeting to consider the project for uniting, by railroad, the Mississippi and Ohio valleys to the Gulf of Mexico, was held at Mobile on the 11th of January, 1847.

The proposition was novel, and the inevitable expenditure enormous, but so striking did the advantages of such a connection appear, even upon the most cursory examination, that a committee of influential citizens of Mobile, was appointed to obtain accurate information regarding the proposed route and its feasibility. A reconnaissance was made by Louis Truist, Esq., civil engineer, and so favorable was his report, that applications were immediately made to the Legislatures of the four States through which the proposed road was to pass, for the requisite charters.

These were granted without delay, and the company soon organized under favorable auspices.

Scarcely three years have elapsed since the organization, yet the whole route has been accurately surveyed, the expenses attending the construction of every mile of the road have been ascertained, and public opinion, which at first regarded the scheme doubtfully, (and many openly ridiculed it,) has been enlightened and propitiated. Seventy miles of the road have been located, and thirty-three miles are nearly completed and will soon be in use, and it is hoped that another twelve months will witness its extension beyond the Buckatunga.

Although this progress is not all its friends desired, yet when we take into consideration the magnitude of the undertaking, the necessary delays for the surveys, the exceeding timidity of capital, the great outlay demanded, the little experience in, and practical acquaintance with railway improvements, in the greater portion of the country more immediately interested & from which the means of construction must be derived, and the slowness with which great and novel enterprises make their way to the confidence of the people, it is rather a matter of surprise that so much has been accomplished.

The prospects of the road are cheering. More than a million of dollars stock have been subscribed in Alabama, the subscription in Mississippi, though comparatively small, is almost daily increasing, from Tennessee and Kentucky we hear the most favorable tidings, the magnificent grant of the public lands, by Congress, will if judiciously disposed of, furnish means to equip and iron the road, and the Directors are not without hopes of obtaining efficient aid, from the Legislatures of the four great States, so vitally interested in its speedy completion, at their approaching sessions. If the company meet with that response from eastern Mississippi, which they feel that the deep interest she has at stake warrant them in expecting with confidence, there is nothing that need prevent the daily passage of the locomotive on its iron track, from the Gulf to the Tennessee within the next two years.

With this brief notice—for the limits of a newspaper article preclude elaboration—of the commencement, progress, and promise of the proposed railroad, I proceed to consider its feasibility. To arrive at a correct conclusion upon this subject, we must first enquire, what is requisite to the feasibility of any railroad enterprise; and secondly, does the road under consideration possess these essential characteristics?

To the first enquiry it may be generally responded—

1. The termini of the road should be points of commercial importance, representing sections of diverse productions, between which interchange of products is essential or desirable—or

2. The proposed route should offer superior facilities to the traveller, such as would afford a saving of time, distance and expense, and attract to it a heavy travelling custom—or,

3. The road should pass through rich agricultural or mineral districts, and afford the surest, the speediest, the cheapest, and the most desirable avenue to market, for an amount of produce and way-travel sufficient to support it.

If a road answers either of the above conditions, it is essential, in the second place, that the country through which it must pass, should offer no insuperable barriers to its construction. By this I mean that mountains and rivers should not so frequently intervene, as to require an expenditure in building and working it, unwarranted by its prospective business and revenue.

No capitalist with any railroad experience, would hesitate to commend, or embark in any enterprise that in his judgment united

the last and either of the preceding characteristics. If then it should be found, upon examination, that the Mobile and Ohio Railroad combines the last with all the others, it would seem that the most timid should be inspired with confidence, and that the most skeptical must be convinced.

Let us proceed to the second enquiry, and test the feasibility of this great work, by the several conditions laid down above. The termini originally proposed were the city of Mobile, the natural outlet for the produce of a large portion of Alabama and Mississippi, the largest city in either State, and the third exporting city in the Union, and a point at or near the mouth of the Ohio river.

By the completion of the Illinois Central Railroad, with its lateral branches to Chicago and Dubuque—and this work is now being rapidly constructed—a complete railway connection will be established between Mobile on the Gulf of Mexico, Chicago on Lake Michigan, Peru, at the head of navigation on the Illinois river and one of the termini of the great Illinois Canal, and passing thro' Galena and the rich lead mining region, with Dubuque in Iowa near the head waters of the Mississippi. A mere glance at the map and the slightest knowledge of the capacity of the vast territory to be traversed by this great chain of Railroads, will suffice to show the immense importance of the line from the Ohio to Mobile.

It unites sections of diverse products. It binds with an iron band the young and flourishing cities of the growing west, to the best shipping port upon the Gulf.

And if we consider Columbus, Ky., the northern terminus of this road, it must with its completion, become a place of great importance. It will be the entrepot of the immense produce of the West, receiving a large portion of the freights from the "Central Road" and its branches, as well as from small steamers plying on the Ohio and upper Mississippi rivers, and forwarding them by the Mobile and Ohio road to the Gulf, for sale or shipment, and in return, will receive and transmit westward, the groceries, cotton, &c., with which the planting States furnish that section. With the Illinois Central Railroad completed—and it is now in the hands of capitalists who are prosecuting the work with great vigor, and who promise to have it in operation within three years—the trade that would spring up between its southern terminus and the Gulf States, would fully warrant, nay demand, the construction of this road, although its route might lie through a barren heath. We find then the first condition fully met by the Mobile and Ohio Railroad.

We will now consider it as a route for travel. The great desideratum of travelling may be considered to be, speed, cheapness, and safety. The route that combines these in the greatest degree will always be preferred. We shall take it for granted, that in all these particulars railroads have the advantage over any other means of transit. From an accurate calculation it has been found that, in round numbers, nine millions of people, inhabiting north and west Alabama, north and east Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, and portions of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New York, would be connected with the Gulf by this Railroad, in less distance, time, and I may add expense, than by any other avenue. When we consider the immense traffic carried on between the States mentioned and their more southern neighbors, the great amount of pleasure travel between the sections, and the greatness of their population, we must conclude that the passenger custom of the road will be immense. Let us, however, examine the subject a little more in detail. The trip is now made between Mobile and New York in, at the least, 7 days, (and I suppose its about the same between Columbus and New York) at an expense say of \$65 to \$80. Complete this road and the time will be reduced to 66 hours from Mobile and the fare to \$35—and from Columbus, to 60 hours time and \$30 fare.

From the mouth of the Ohio to Mobile by Railroad, it is 492 miles; by the Mississippi river to New Orleans it is 1046 miles, making a difference in time, between the routes, 80 hours, in distance 554 miles, and in fare \$5 to \$8.

From St. Louis to New Orleans by river, it is 1266 miles; to Mobile via river and railroad it is 696 miles; difference in favor of Mobile in time 38 hours, in distance 657 miles.

From Louisville to New Orleans by river, it is 1403 miles; to Mobile by railroad, via Nashville it is 700 miles; difference in favor of Mobile, 105 hours and 703 miles.

Had I time and space, I might extend this table much farther. I trust, however, I have said enough to prove conclusively that this road when completed, will be the great avenue of communication between the North & South, between the West and the Gulf. I might add, that the distance from Mobile to Galveston is slightly less than from New Orleans thither—that a line of steamers will soon be placed between the two first named cities, and that by this road, and this line of steamers, all the States north of the Gulf and east of the Mississippi, would find by far the nearest, quickest, and cheapest connection with Texas and the Pacific coast.

Of the nature of the country through which this road will pass, I need say but little. It unites some of the richest territory in Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky,

the total annual exports and imports of the counties contiguous to the road in Mississippi, average 178,543 tons, in Kentucky 45,725 tons, in Tennessee 244,520 tons, and in Alabama 156,847 tons, making a grand total of 620,641 tons. The total amount of capital invested in trade, commerce, and manufactures in the same counties is \$15,257,000. From such an exhibition of the wealth and capacity of the country, is it not evident, that acting aside, the great advantages of through travel and freight, the road would be adequately supported?

We now come to the consideration of the last requisite. The entire route from Mobile to the Ohio has been accurately surveyed, and from the report of the engineers it seems peculiarly adapted to railroad purposes. Indeed I venture the assertion that not a single railroad route of equal length can be found in this country combining so many advantages of construction. There is no gradient going North over 40 feet to the mile or going South over 30 feet, and the shortest curve will not be less than 1433 feet radius. The highest elevation on the whole road is not over 650 to 700 feet above tide water at Mobile. To one having any practical knowledge of civil engineering, the great benefits to be derived from slight gradients, will be apparent. Besides, the money and labor saved by them, in the construction of the road-bed, they are of continual advantage in the economy of power which they allow. This will be readily seen from the following statement. A twenty-four ton engine will draw a net load of merchandise, on a level track, weighing 587 tons. The same engine will draw on a grade of 10 feet per mile, 396 tons—on a grade of twenty feet, 296 tons—on a grade of 30 feet, 236 tons—on a grade of 40 feet, 194 tons—on a grade of 50 feet, 163 tons, and on a grade of 60 feet per mile, only 142 tons.

The rate of the cost of traction between the level grade, and the grade of 60 feet, is as 1 to 4.13. Now, when we remember that many roads, in active use and paying well, have much higher gradients, the superiority of this route will be manifest. The Charleston, Georgia and Tennessee Railroad for instance has a maximum grade of about 100 feet to the mile, while the Baltimore and Ohio road has the enormous maximum of 116 feet to the miles.

The natural superiority of the route of this line is also in the few streams which it will be compelled to cross. The Ohio river in Tennessee is the broadest, and that will not require a bridge over 160 feet span.

Again, this absence of rivers and mountains, enables the company to preserve all a direct course from the Gulf to the Ohio. Let us compare it with other roads in this respect. The Mobile and Ohio Railroad only varies 11 per cent from an air line—the Charleston road, above referred to, varies 36 per cent—the New York and Erie road 45 per cent, and the Baltimore and Ohio road 62 per cent. Here we see the great advantage in this respect of this road over all others of which we have any knowledge. I will add on the subject of construction; that an abundance of timber for all its wants is found in the vicinity of the railroad, and brick of excellent quality can be readily manufactured for the masonry.

We proceed to consider briefly what stake Mississippi has in this magnificent undertaking.

The total population of the counties in the State to be accommodated by this road, is 230,445.

The assessed value of the lands in these counties is \$23,740,432. They produce annually about \$626,700 bushels of grain, (corn, wheat, &c.) 536,300 bushels of potatoes, 81,900 lbs of tobacco, 165,500 lbs of wool, and 37,812,800 lbs of cotton. The dairy and orchard products, and the home-made goods of these counties are valued at \$1,181,400. The value of their poultry is \$171,900, and they have invested \$2,633,100 in manufactures and commerce.

The value of the slaves owned in them cannot be less than \$25,000,000. It will be recollected that large portions of the land of these counties is at present uncultivated, and much of it must so continue without some avenue to market is opened up. These lands embrace some of the most fertile in the State.

Now what are the market conveniences of this large and wealthy section? It is dependent upon uncertain river navigation, open hardly three months in the year, and at best attended with great expense and delay. The river is at the extreme of this section, and very much of the produce shipped, must be hauled a great distance over almost impassible roads. Hence, so great are the hauling expenses, nothing but cotton will bear transmission to market, and that is burdened with such heavy charges as materially to interfere with the profits anticipated from its sale. Open up this line of railroad and what do we see? Running as it will through the heart of this section of counties, it greatly lessens the distance and expense of hauling, enables the producer to get his products to market, much earlier in the season, to take advantage of favorable prices, to purchase his supplies as he needs them, at greatly reduced cost, to diversify his products—for wheat, corn, and hay, and butter, and poultry, and a great variety of articles which he does not now produce, or for which he obtains little or nothing, would then be in good demand—and in short to sell all that he produces, and to purchase all that he requires, on much better terms than now. So that he would be doubly a gainer. The citizens of eastern Mississippi, had last season, a practical demonstration of the loss and delay arising from a dependence upon river navigation. Had this railroad been constructed at that time, the planter might have had his cotton at Mobile, when the market was at its best, instead of being obliged to submit to an enormous reduction in price. A very intelligent gentleman of Lowndes county, recently made an accurate estimate of the loss sustained, by the people of that county, on the crop of last year—the loss being the difference between the price obtained or offered for it when it reached Mobile, and the price it would have commanded when ready for market—and he found it amounted to a sum sufficient to build the railroad through the county. These are facts that address themselves emphatically to the pockets of men. The evils of last winter may recur again and again. No skill can guard against them, no prudence can escape them.

The only security in the early completion of an avenue to market that shall be always open and always available. The completion of this railroad would be of vast benefit to the merchant. He could then do an equal amount of business on a far less capital than now. Instead of being obliged to lay in stock for a year's trade at once, he might receive fresh supplies weekly or daily if he choose. It would enable him to sell much cheaper than he now can, and of course his customers would profit by it. Take for illustration the prime article of bagging and rope. Now he is obliged to keep a stock a year ahead of the demand. He must purchase it at New Orleans or Mobile, paying commissions, insurance, dray and wharf charges, and freight for nearly 2000 miles carriage added to its original cost.

This road completed, he could purchase of the manufacturer as he wanted it, and would only have freight to pay for from 200 to 400 miles of carriage.

This season much suffering is anticipated in portions of Eastern Mississippi and Western Alabama, from a deficiency in the corn crop, and I am told corn is now selling